

cultivate deeper relationships with Vale members as they discussed the subtle transformations involved in developing mediumship. Her insights into, and lucid explanations of, the complex process of enskillment and self-fashioning that such training requires make this an exceptionally rich ethnography.

Where the book falls short is its account of the Vale do Amanhecer's generative influences. Aside from a superficial mention of Theosophy, Pierini ignores the important role of esoteric and theosophical ideas on the Vale's cosmology, doctrine, and organizational structures. The esoteric influences on the Vale are many and prominent—including references to the Great Masters, the Indian Space Current, and the White Currents of the Greater Orient. One of the key stories legitimating Tia Neiva's unusual form of clairvoyance, which Pierini dutifully recounts but never scrutinizes, involves a Tibetan master who initiated her into "high magic." Concepts like the seven rays, initiatic cycles, and kabbalistic wisdom, as well as the Vale's own complex hierarchy of initiatic grades, also point to the generative influence of esoteric thought on the Vale's religious imagination. In Pierini's account, however, these references appear as disconnected idiosyncrasies.

Leaving aside these objections, *Jaguars of the Dawn* is, by far, the most comprehensive account of the Vale do Amanhecer in English. It is not a text friendly to undergraduate students or one that is likely to appeal to a general reader, however. But for scholars of new religious movements, anthropologists of religion, or those interested in the phenomenology of religious experience, embodied learning, or the therapeutics of spirit mediumship, *Jaguars of the Dawn* offers a thoughtful and detailed account of a fascinating—and internationally growing—new religion.

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*Guest is God: Pilgrimage, Tourism, and Making Paradise in India.* By Drew Thomases. Oxford University Press, 2019. ix + 212 pages. \$99.00 cloth; ebook available.

This nuanced study of Pushkar, a pilgrimage town in northwestern Rajasthan, India, incorporates an interdisciplinary range of interpretive perspectives that highlight religious, political, historical, and socio-economic dimensions of the site. Based on extensive fieldwork, interviews, participant observation, and careful analysis, the book illuminates the complex juxtaposition of myth, history, modernity, and the religio-economics of pilgrimage that make this site unique in contemporary India.

Pushkar's population of roughly 20,000 plays host to about two million pilgrims annually, who come to seek the favor of Brahma, Hinduism's creator god, at his special temple and holy lake. Pilgrims believe that Brahma established Pushkar as his domicile in past eons by creating a lake in the desert and performing sacrificial rites there. They come for a variety of reasons—blessings for a marriage, success on exams, the birth of a son, for example—but also to receive the unique grace of Hinduism's creator god at one of the only temples in India dedicated to him. Along with Indian pilgrims, the town has seen an increasing number of international visitors since the 1970s, including backpackers, cultural tourists (the town hosts an annual camel fair), and an increasingly wide range of spiritual seekers from various socioeconomic backgrounds.

Drew Thomases explores how local tour guides, mainly Brahmins, negotiate and instantiate sacred space within an increasingly globalized tourism industry that blends Hindu ideas and practices with the exigencies of servicing the practical needs of a diverse international and national clientele. In so doing, the author elucidates the tensions, compromises, and strategies that emerge as local guides supply both traditional Hindu pilgrims and international pilgrims with “a vision of human belonging that attempts to embrace all” (3).

The author's method is to study a *discourse* about Pushkar, rather than a town called Pushkar. This Geertzian enterprise focuses on the rhetoric of making Pushkar paradise and includes a study of beliefs about Hindu universalism, the inclusion of non-Hindus, the ritual repertoires performed by Brahmins for their clients, myths about the place articulated by tour guides and in cheap pamphlets, and environmental renewal initiatives undertaken by locals concerned about the lake's pollution. The research is thus not so much focused on the place itself but on the people who enact these ideas and practices each day.

Because of local gender norms, this means that the author primarily focuses on men who are engaged in the tourism industry—shopkeepers, hotel owners, drivers, and most prominently, the overwhelmingly Brahmin priests and tour guides who work at the Brahma temple and lake itself. Pushkar is unusual in that Brahmins make up between 30 and 50 percent of its population, a substantially higher percentage than in other parts of India. In examining how these men negotiate their participation in the spiritual tourism of Pushkar, Thomases resists the temptation to reduce religion to an economic strategy or political tool, on the one hand, or to some pristine sphere of its own, unsullied by the outside world, on the other. Rather he embraces a botanical term, “inoculation,” which illuminates how religion and tourism, belief and economics, can have separate identities at times, and completely merge together at other times. For him, this growing together is not necessarily something polluting or destructive. Rather, it is a way of understanding

both the religious and practical dimensions of pilgrimage to Pushkar, and seeing how they are inextricably tied together in religious tourism.

Drawing upon David Chidester and Edward Linenthal's contention that sacred space is "inevitably contested space," the author argues that "Pushkar becomes paradise not because of some timeless truth, but through the actions of historically situated people who negotiate its terms, articulate its borders, and claim ownership over it" (10). This allows Thomases to move beyond an exclusive focus on the mythical stories that cast Pushkar as a holy place and to pay close attention to how the town is shaped and produced by the tourism industry and the economic exigencies of everyone whose livelihoods depend on maintaining the "sacred" that visitors encounter there.

The author's fieldwork extends to a period of thirty months between 2008 and 2017, giving him ample time to observe and experience Pushkar through every season and festival, and through conversations with a wide variety of contacts, both local and foreign. His ethnographic descriptions and analyses are rich, nuanced, thorough, and insightful. Along the way, he examines the tensions between moneyed interests, virulent nationalism, and attempts to universalize Hinduism, to make a "brother" out of the other. Thomases also explores initiatives by local Hindus to clean up Pushkar's sacred lake, and to ritualize their environmental activities, to make and maintain "paradise." The author completes his study with an examination of a new generation of tour guides in Pushkar, an exploration of the annual camel fair and its discourse on color, and the problematic maintenance of an atmosphere of peace in a town filled with traffic noise, electronic dance music, and loudspeakers blaring various mantras and bhajans. The author skillfully ties together these disparate topics and successfully illuminates Pushkar's struggle to maintain its integrity in a globalizing India where complex negotiations must take place every day between economics, sacred traditions, and hospitality to visitors.

My main criticism of this work is that its respondents are primarily men. The author acknowledges this limitation, pleading that the context of Pushkar is still decidedly patriarchal, making it difficult to speak with women and to consider their perspectives. While there is undoubtedly some truth to this contention, I would argue that we are limited to a somewhat one-sided perspective on Pushkar by Thomases' decision to speak mainly with men in his research. As a male who has conducted long-term research in India, I can safely say that it is both possible and unfailingly illuminating to speak discreetly with women and to gain their unique perspectives on the topics at hand. This criticism notwithstanding, *Guest is God* is still superior ethnography, with a skillful balance of observation and theory, description and analysis of a unique site of Hindu pilgrimage.

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